

**OPENING OF AGFEST AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS 2023
ON BEHALF OF RURAL YOUTH TASMANIA
ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE ALAN BLOW AO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
CARRICK, WEDNESDAY 4 MAY 2023**

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to open Agfest 2023. It is a real pleasure to be here in this beautiful country setting at Quercus Park near Carrick.

This is the first time that Margaret and I have attended Agfest as Lieutenant Governor. We have, however, noted the success of the event through the years and in particular the way that it has become an integral part of the rural community calendar.

I know that our Governor and your Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker, was very much looking forward to joining you again this year. As it happens, however, she and her husband are in London in order to represent the Tasmanian people at the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

This is, of course, the 41st anniversary of Agfest — first held in May 1983 at Symmons Plains, Perth. The first event attracted a total of 111 exhibitors and 9,000 patrons and was a two-day event.

The field days grew in popularity and by 1986 had outgrown the Symmons Plains site. Rural Youth set about finding a permanent site and purchased a block of just under 200 acres at Carrick. The first Agfest to be held on this site was in 1987, attracting 203 exhibitors and 23,000 patrons.¹

It is a testament to the commitment and tenacity of successive organising committees that Agfest has been able to overcome the many challenges to be here again in 2023, stronger than ever.

You have worked hard to overcome those and stay true to the original intent of Rural Youth: to provide all members, not just those who live or work on farms, the

¹ <https://www.agfest.com.au/history> accessed 26 Apr 23

opportunity to connect with other young people interested in developing themselves, meeting new people and having fun.²

It is worth acknowledging the significant economic benefits that Agfest brings to the region. Some \$26 million flow through each year. With more than 500 exhibitors there is something for everyone. Many of the exhibitors continue to benefit from the exposure to local, national and international markets in the months following the main 'Agfest in the Paddock' and subsequent 'Agfest in the Cloud' that further increases the ability for people to participate in what has been acknowledged as one of the premier field days in Australia.³

Each year charities benefit from the funds raised. Rural Youth fund all of their activities throughout the year from the proceeds, but they also give generously to other charities.

Over the last decade, Rural Youth have supported Life Without Barriers, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Ronald McDonald House Hobart, Leukaemia Foundation, Teen Challenge, Rural Alive and Well Inc Tasmania and Canteen Tasmania. The organisation's combined donations to these charities were more than \$15,000.

And that is in addition to the fact that Agfest funds the operation of Rural Youth in Tasmania throughout the year, allowing the group to continue to provide a forum for people aged between 15 and 30 years to come together to make friends, learn skills and work towards Growing Rural Tasmania.⁴

Ladies and gentlemen, I will conclude by congratulating the Volunteer Committee of Rural Youth Tasmania: the 50-plus young Tasmanians whose outstanding efforts make Agfest possible each year.

To Rural Youth State President Brady Robins, Agfest Chairman Caine Evans, and your hard-working colleagues – well done. We are proud of what you do for young Tasmanians. It now gives me great pleasure to declare Agfest 2023 officially open, and to invite you to enjoy the Agfest Field Days together.

Thank you.

² <https://www.ruralyouth.com.au/faqs> accessed 26 Apr 23

³ <https://www.agfest.com.au/about> accessed 23 Apr 23

⁴ <https://www.ruralyouth.com.au/faqs> accessed 26 Apr 23